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Gen. Walters. . . "abuses distorted. . ."

Innuendo crushes CIA, says Watergate figure

Saying that intelligence gathering is a force for peace, the former deputy director of the Central Intelligence Agency said in Sacramento Wednesday the CIA suffers from "an avalanche of innuendo and slander with no ability to reply."

Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, who resigned last month as No. 2 in the CIA to cap a 35-year military career, said that despite recent criticism of the CIA, an all-time high of young people are applying for jobs with the agency.

Walters transferred from the Army in 1972 to the CIA post and was a key Watergate witness in 1973 and 1974 who testified that the White House ordered him to stop the FBI Watergate probe.

Although Walters said he first approached FBI Director Patrick Gray, he later abandoned the plan, telling Gray, "I'm not going to let those kids at the White House kick me around."

Walters told the Kiwanis Club meeting at the Senator Hotel that the CIA, which has had 76,000 employees since it was organized in 1947, has had a few "nuts, crackpots and some who have used bad judgment . . ."

"Such abuses have been distorted out of proportion and have been taken as the

rule rather than the exception."

He called it bad judgment when a man committed suicide while under the influence of CIA-induced drugs during an experiment and when the CIA worked briefly with the Mafia in a scheme to "put away" Fidel Castro.

Walters said, "We do not believe that the excuse of secrecy should be used to hide abuses," but he said, "We live in tough times."

"We face today, for the first time since Valley Forge, a global enemy, a global adversary . . . the Soviets."

Although he said he hopes U.S.-Soviet talks will lead to "mutual benefit," he said "the CIA's duty is not to let the United States be surprised."

He said the CIA is to "broaden and deepen the understanding of the decision-makers of the United States . . . to prepare for contingencies before they occur. Without intelligence, no agreement could take place."

Walters, who has been an Army intelligence and combat officer and diplomatic aide, said, "We need intelligence for the same reasons that George Washington sent Nathan Hale behind the British lines."